

of the two widely held viewpoints on how best to prevent nuclear war: to freeze first, then trust to negotiations. The viewpoint held by most persons with the best knowledge of the Soviets is to first motivate them to reduce armaments by modernizing our own.

The Communist party's aim is to impose a communal way of life on all peoples by violence and deceit—much as Hitler also outlined for the Nazi party in *Mein Kampf*. Hindsight suggests that Neville Chamberlain's trust of Adolph Hitler cost hundreds of millions of lives (some in fire storms similar to those of nuclear war). The equivalent of our second viewpoint above was Churchill's plea to modernize deterrents. The biggest policeman is the one least apt to be challenged to fight. The best way to avoid war is to stay strong—according to George Washington.

In case you need knowledgeable authors to balance the views on prevention of nuclear war, I suggest physicist William Shuler, Lawrence Laboratory, Livermore, California, who writes, "What could stop the Soviets from violating the freeze? I, for one, do not want to live under their system." Also, Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle seems to articulate great knowledge of factors for prevention of nuclear war. When we question the need for surgery, are we wise to hear from the surgeons (preferably in the same issue)? When we have symposia on the horrors of biological warfare or of chemical warfare (very appropriate subjects for future *WJM* issues) would we better avoid inbreeding of ideas by including the biologists, the chemists and, above all, those we have made responsible for prevention?

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TO THE EDITOR: *The Western Journal of Medicine* is to be commended for publishing the symposium on the Medical Consequences of Nuclear War in February. Although we have lived with an awareness of this increasing problem since 1945, it has appeared to have little effect on most of our lives. There have been, however, important psychological phenomena. Undoubtedly, some denial of the seriousness of the issue is a partial explanation of our silence until the world now has 60,000 nuclear weapons. A subconscious influence on our society has probably been a factor in problems of crime and personal strife of many types.

Carefully studying the almost incomprehensible medical, social and environmental problems, the reader may feel overwhelmed and quite depressed. After a period of reflection and consideration of this subject, many have found an energizing realization that the horrible scenario has not taken place and that this can and must be avoided. The prevention of a nuclear disaster may well be the most important medical issue in history.

Peace movements have come and gone over the years, but there is presently a growing momentum, including nuclear arms control, that is not about to stop. The reason is simply that there has never been a situation like we have today, and there is now no acceptable alternative to truly investigating international

conflict resolution. This is not a naive concept. If clear thinking can prevail, and it probably will, we can be optimistic not only that nuclear war can be avoided, but that a new level of human understanding can come about. Such beautiful dreams are not new and attempts at world government with policing activities have been only partially successful, but again there has never been an adequate reason to make it work. As Dr Judith Lipton said, "Yet, by beaking through the denial and fatalism and becoming involved in an active way on behalf of our children and the planet, we have an opportunity to find enhanced meaning."¹ The "Medical Consequences of Nuclear War" is heavy reading, but there is possibly the greatest opportunity that mankind has been offered—just over the horizon.

In primitive times, people honestly had fear of the unknown on the other side of the mountain. Extensive resources, experience and communication have eliminated to a large degree that enormous stumbling block. There is no choice at this time but to honestly negotiate for peace in the world and for control and the gradual elimination of nuclear weapons. We should not feel helpless and, therefore, become ineffective because of the magnitude of the problem. Physicians continue to work for life and health and for the prevention of epidemics and disease.

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REFERENCE

1. Lipton JE: The last traffic jam (Medical Consequences of Nuclear War Symposium). *West J Med* 1983 Feb; 138:222-226

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The above letters are representative of many more that have been received from obviously concerned readers who have taken the time to respond to the symposium on the Medical Consequences of Nuclear War which appeared in the February issue. The editors believe these fairly reflect most of the comments received. Because of space limitations it is likely that no further correspondence will be published concerning this symposium.

—MSMW

No Elbow Damage in Young Baseball Pitchers

TO THE EDITOR: As a physician and youth-league baseball coach, I have been asked whether pitching imposes significant risk of enduring damage to the elbows of young players. Only recently has this issue been subjected to scientific investigation.

Gugenheim and co-workers¹ examined 595 Little League pitchers ages 9 to 13 in Houston. It was noted that elbow x-ray findings fall into two categories: (1) quite common anatomic variants that do not correlate with any symptoms or problems and (2) quite uncommon, potentially disabling abnormalities (osteochondrosis/avascular necrosis/osteochondritis dissecans) that are apparently unrelated to athletics. No correlation